

Discourse on 'metropolitan driving forces' and 'uneven development': Germany and the RhineRuhr Conurbation

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DISCOURSES ON 'METROPOLITAN DRIVING FORCES' AND 'UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT': GERMANY AND THE RHINERUHR CONURBATION

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Keywords:	uneven development, rescaling, metropolitan regions, polycentricity, metropolitan governance, strategic planning



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Discourse on ‘Metropolitan Driving Forces’ and ‘Uneven Development’: Germany and the RhineRuhr conurbation

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English Abstract:

Knapp W. and Schmitt P. (2008) Discourse on ‘Metropolitan Driving Forces’ and ‘Uneven Development’: Germany and the RhineRuhr conurbation

This paper provides a contribution to the debate on re-scaling and uneven development from the point of view of the governance of spatial development. Its main purpose is not to advance new theoretical perspectives on ‘re-scaling’ and ‘uneven development’ but rather to reflect on those notions in the context of the actual reworking of territorial space in Germany, and the attempts to establish a regime of metropolitan regions as ‘driving forces’ of growth and international competitiveness. The paper examines Germany’s inherited and newly emerging polycentric landscape of metropolitan regions, and the distinct division of metropolitan functions that have developed among them. More specifically, we discuss the re-scaling process within Germany’s biggest conurbation, RhineRuhr, and the obvious difficulties faced in creating metropolitan governance structures. We argue that this can (also) be ascribed to the uneven socio-economic development within RhineRuhr, which has so far impeded a more synergetic, multi-scalar approach to making better use of urban complementarities at the regional scale.

Uneven development, Re-scaling, Metropolitan regions, Polycentricity, Metropolitan governance, Strategic planning

German Abstract:

Knapp W. und Schmitt P. (2008)

Metropolisierungsdiskurse und ungleiche Entwicklung: Deutschland und der Ballungsraum RheinRuhr

Die gegenwärtig in weiten Teilen Westeuropas zu beobachtende räumliche Redimensionierung von Staatlichkeit erfolgt in national- und lokalspezifischen Formen und mit jeweils besonderen politischen Strategien. In diesem Kontext werden im Folgenden der Versuch ein polyzentrisches Regime von Metropolregionen in Deutschland zu etablieren reflektiert und dabei speziell die Entwicklung des polyzentrischen Ballungsraums RheinRuhr zur Metropolregion kritisch beleuchtet. Im Mittelpunkt stehen die damit einhergehende Zunahme inter-regional ungleicher Entwicklung auf der nationalen Ebene und der Umgang mit dieser konfliktgeladenen räumlichen Redimensionierung. Am Beispiel der designierten Metropolregion RheinRuhr zeigt sich außerdem, dass auch intra-regional ungleiche sozio-ökonomische Bedingungen die Entwicklung dieser zwar polyzentrischen aber auch komplementären räumlichen Konfiguration beeinträchtigen.

ungleiche Entwicklung, Metropolregionen, Polyzentralität, metropolitane Governance, strategische Planung

CRES-2006-0251.R2 (German abstract already provided)

Analyse des "forces motrices métropolitaines" et du "développement irrégulier" :

Allemagne et conurbation Rhin-Ruhr.

Dr Wolfgang Knapp et Dr Peter Schmitt

Cet article apporte une contribution au débat sur la transformation et le développement irrégulier du point de vue de la gouvernance du développement spatial. Son objet principal n'est pas d'avancer de nouvelles perspectives théoriques sur le changement d'échelle et le développement irrégulier mais plutôt de réfléchir sur ces notions dans le contexte du remaniement réel de l'espace territorial en Allemagne et sur les tentatives d'établir un régime de métropoles régionales en tant que forces motrices de croissance et de compétitivité internationale. Les auteurs examinent le paysage polycentrique allemand, ancien et en émergence, de métropoles régionales et la division distincte des fonctions métropolitaines qui s'y sont développées. Plus précisément, nous discutons du processus de transformation au sein de la plus importante conurbation allemande, la région Rhin-Rhur, et des difficultés évidentes que rencontre la création de structures de gouvernance métropolitaine. Nous faisons valoir que cela peut (également) être attribué au développement socio-économique irrégulier de la région Rhin-Rhur qui, jusqu'à présent, a empêché une approche synergétique multi-échelle permettant de mieux utiliser les complémentarités urbaines à l'échelle de la région.

Développement irrégulier, changement d'échelle, métropole régionale, polycentricité, gouvernance métropolitaine, planification stratégique.

Codes JEL :

R12, R5 et R58

CRES-2006-0251.R2 (German abstract already provided)

Discurso de los 'desencadenantes metropolitanos' y el 'desarrollo desequilibrado': Alemania y la conurbación del área de Rin-Ruhr

Dr Wolfgang Knapp and Dr Peter Schmitt

En este artículo hacemos una contribución al debate del reescalamiento y el desarrollo desequilibrado desde el punto de vista del control del desarrollo espacial. Su principal finalidad no es adelantar nuevas perspectivas teóricas sobre el 'reescalamiento' y el 'desarrollo desequilibrado' sino más bien analizar estas nociones en el contexto de la presente actualización en el espacio territorial de Alemania y los intentos por establecer un régimen de regiones metropolitanas como desencadenantes del crecimiento y la competitividad internacional. En este ensayo examinamos el antiguo y el nuevo panorama policéntrico que está surgiendo en las regiones metropolitanas de Alemania y la división distintiva de las funciones metropolitanas que se han desarrollado entre ellas. En concreto abordamos el proceso de reescalamiento en la mayor conurbación de Alemania, el área de Rin-Ruhr y las obvias dificultades al crear estructuras de gobierno metropolitano. Afirmamos que esto (también) puede atribuirse a un desarrollo socioeconómico desequilibrado en el área de Rin-Ruhr que hasta ahora ha impedido un enfoque más sinérgico y multiescalar para poder usar mejor las complementariedades urbanas a escala regional.

Desarrollo desequilibrado

Reescalamiento

Regiones metropolitanas

Policentralidad

Gobernanza metropolitana

Planificación estratégica

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INTRODUCTION: UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT AND NEW GEOGRAPHIES OF STATE REGULATION

Each historical round of capitalist development unfolds through the production of specific patterns of socio-spatial organizations (MASSEY 1985; SMITH 1984) in which particular territories, places and scales are mobilized as productive forces (STORPER and WALKER, 1989). On the one hand, capitalism is inherently oriented towards the elimination of geographical barriers to the accumulation process in search of new resources, new markets, and new investment opportunities. On the other hand, this expansionary, de-territorializing tendency within capitalism is only one moment within a socio-spatial dialectic that continually moulds and reworks the geographical landscape. As HARVEY (1985, p. 145) has argued, 'spatial organization is necessary to overcome space'. It is only through relatively fixed and immobile socially produced configurations of territorial organization – including urban built environments, local or regional production complexes, transport and communication infrastructures, and state regulatory institutions – that the continual temporal acceleration and spatial expansion of capital circulation can be achieved (HARVEY 1982, p. 416). However, capital's dynamic renders its own historically specific geographical preconditions obsolete, inducing a wave of restructuring to re-territorialize and thereby reactivate the process of capital circulation. This recurrent dynamic of de- and re-territorialization is organized through a wide range of scalar configurations, each produced through the intermeshing of urban networks and state territorial structures that together constitute a relatively fixed geographical infrastructure composed of distinctive forms of territorial organization for each historical round of capitalist expansion (SMITH 1995).

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As capital is restructured during periods of sustained economic crisis such as with the so-called ‘Fordist’ crisis ongoing since the early 1970s, the configurations of socio-spatial organization upon which it is grounded are likewise reworked by contested processes to establish a new geographic landscape for the accumulation process in which some places, territories, and scales are privileged over and above others as sites for expanded capital accumulation. Territorial states thus play a crucial role in moulding the social relations of capitalism into relatively stable geographical-organisational configurations within which capital’s locational dynamics are articulated. In addition, they also function as key institutional arenas in and through which particular approaches to the regulation of uneven development may be introduced, such as strategies of territorial development and place-promotion or strategies of territorial redistribution.

Globalization is a dialectical process, through which the movement of capital, commodities, people, and information across geographical space is continually expanded and accelerated (the moment of de-territorialization) and relatively fixed and immobile socio-territorial infrastructures at multiple geographical scales are produced and reconfigured to enable such expanded, accelerated movement (the moment of re-territorialization). Unlike interpretations that represent the spaces of globalization (based upon circulation, flows, and geographical mobility) and the spaces of territorialization (based upon territoriality, borders, and geographical fixity) as mutually opposed systems of interaction and in contrast to the related image of global space as a ‘placeless, distance-less, and borderless’ realm, the contemporary round of de-territorialization has been intrinsically dependent upon, intertwined with and expressed through reconfiguration and re-scaling of territoriality (LEFEBVRE 1991; BRENNER 1997a, 2004a). Processes of (re-)territorialization remain endemic to capitalism, but today they are ‘jumping’ at

once above, below, and around the national scale on which they converged throughout history until the 1980s (SWYNGEDOUW 1997; SMITH 1995). Shifts in the scalar organization of territoriality have decentred the national scale of accumulation, urbanization and state regulation in favour of new sub-and supranational territorial configurations. In contrast to the privileging of the national economy and the state under 'Fordism', no single level of political-economic interaction currently predominates over any others. Collinge (1999) has characterized these multifaceted shifts as a 'relativization of scales' (see also JESSOP 1999a). For Swyngedouw (1992, 1997) these rescaling processes represent the conflictual dynamic of 'glocalization' in which global socio-spatial integration is proceeding in tandem with a regionalization and localization of social relations. In this sense *"the local/global interplay of contemporary restructuring processes should be thought of as a single, combined process with two inherently related, albeit contradictory, movements and as a process which involves a de facto re-composition of the articulation of the geographical scales of economic and social life"* (SWYNGEDOUW 1992, p. 40).

Globalization has entailed a simultaneous territorial reorganization of the urbanization process on the global, national and urban-regional scales. Firstly, new forms of hierarchical development within urban systems can be viewed as the territorial embodiment of globalization (see for example, FRIEDMANN 1986, 1995; SASSEN 1991, 1993; SCOTT, 2001; TAYLOR 2004). Notwithstanding the fact that today all cities more or less are globalizing, high ranking global cities and global city-regions in particular are conceived as competing yet interdependent territorially-specific urban places within which the territorialized technological, institutional and social infrastructure of globalization is secured and various production processes crucial to globalization occur. A second dimension of this re-territorialization of the urban process has

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3 been the re-composition of the urban form (see CASTELLS 1989; SCOTT et al. 2001; HALL
4 and PAIN 2006). Urban systems articulate new, increasingly multi-centred, patchwork patterns
5 of supra-local urbanization that blur inherited models of urban centrality. The monocentric
6 model is no longer seen as suitable in the exploration of evolving spatial patterns in urban
7 Europe, North America and Asia. Central City locations are no longer the sole urban cluster of
8 economic activity but are often simply part of a wider spatial division of labour within the urban
9 area with other significant clustering – for instance new-style headquarter complexes, back
10 offices, airport cities, logistics management, and large-scale entertainment. The enlarging of the
11 urban scale however takes place not only at the level of a city and its surrounding area but also
12 at that of two or more cities, the so-called polycentric urban or mega-city region, physically
13 separate but functionally networked, clustered around one or more larger central cities, and
14 drawing economic strength from a new functional division of labour (HALL and PAIN 2006, p.
15 1). Thirdly, contemporary cities are embedded in transnational flows of capital, commodities,
16 knowledge and labour-power (see CASTELLS 2000; TAYLOR 2004). They are no longer to be
17 conceived as the sub-national components of self-enclosed and nationally scaled regimes of
18 accumulation, but rather as 'neo-Marshallian nodes within global networks' (AMIN and
19 THRIFT 1992) and as the 'regional motors of the global economy' (SCOTT 1996).

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22 The re-scaling of urbanization leads to a concomitant re-scaling of the state through which
23 qualitatively new institutions and regulatory forms are currently being produced on both the sub-
24 and supra-national scales; while the role of the national scale as a level of governance is itself
25 being redefined in response to the globalization processes (see JESSOP's various writings on
26 state reorganization, for example 1999b and 2000). These re-scaled configurations of state
27 territorial organization in turn transform the conditions under which the urbanization process

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3 unfolds (BRENNER 2003, 2004a, 2004b). It is above all through its key role in the mobilization
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5 of urban space as a force of production that local and regional states, in particular, have acquired
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7 an increasing structural significance within each state's administrative hierarchy. A major goal
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9 of these 'glocally' oriented state institutions is to enhance the locational advantages and
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11 productive capacities of their territory as internationally competitive nodes in the intensifying
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13 interspatial competition. Following BRENNER (2003 p.308), *"intra-national uneven*
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15 *development is no longer viewed as a problem to be alleviated through redistributive regional*
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17 *policies, but rather as the geographical basis on which place-and territory-specific strategies of*
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19 *economic development may be mobilized."*

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22 From this point of view, the contemporary metropolitan institutional reform projects in
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24 European city-regions can be interpreted as a key politico-institutional mechanism through
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26 which broader transformations of state spatiality have been unfolding. However, the realization
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28 of effective spatial development and governance structures in specific agglomerations varies
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30 substantially between metropolitan regions, depending on the multitude of actors within
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32 different institutional contexts. This diversity is in part due to contrasting historical trajectories
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34 and socio-economic structures prevalent among metropolitan regions, and to the organization of
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36 the state's territorial and institutional system. Uneven spatio-economic conditions within the
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38 major metropolitan regions may influence the understanding and further development of the
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40 urban-region as a complex and differentiated but also complementary urban configuration.
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53 This paper provides a contribution to the debate on re-scaling and uneven development from the
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55 point of view of the governance of spatial development. Its main purpose is not to advance new
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57 theoretical perspectives on 're-scaling' and 'uneven development', but rather to reflect on those
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notions in the context of the actual reworking of territorial space in Germany and the attempts to establish a regime of metropolitan regions as German ‘driving forces’ of growth and international competitiveness. Its ambition is thus rather modest but nonetheless significant. On the one hand, it aims to place empirical explorations in a broader theoretical context, bringing together their individual contribution to fill in some of the various facets of re-scaling phenomena. On the other hand, it aims to ground theoretical debates in empirical inquiry. The focus here is on the recent ‘metropolization’ of the urban System in Germany and its largest conurbation *RhineRuhr*. In the next section, we outline the re-scaling of state space in post-unification Germany and the new metropolitan discourse in German strategic spatial planning. Here we deal with the changing framework that is currently fuelling uneven geographical development by promoting the centralization of growth within specialized core urban regions. This will be followed by a discussion of current concerted discourse strategies to manage – at least rhetorically – this new uneven development in Germany and to calm related potential conflicts in spatial planning and policies. The following section describes Germany’s inherited and newly emerging polycentric landscape of metropolitan regions and the distinct division of metropolitan functions that have developed among these regions. The third section of the paper focuses on the rescaling process within RhineRuhr and the obvious difficulties faced in creating metropolitan governance structures. In the final section, therefore, we conclude with a short discussion of the further implementation of the planning construct ‘Metropolitan Region RhineRuhr’ and of a more synergetic, multi-scalar approach for RhineRuhr. This paper follows on from the findings produced in the two INTERREG projects EURBANET (SCHMITT and KNAPP 2001; SCHMITT et. al. 2003; KNAPP et. al. 2004) and POLYNET (HALL and PAIN 2006; KNAPP et. al. 2006a; KNAPP et. al. 2006b). From a methodical point of view, these

research projects, and thus also our following statements and conclusions, are based on secondary data and policy document analysis as well as on interviews with several stakeholders.

THE UNEVEN REWORKING OF NATIONAL TERRITORIAL SPACE

Subsequent to the global economic crisis of the 1970s, historically entrenched forms of national state territoriality are being systematically unravelled and a significant re-scaling of a series of regulatory practices can be seen in many countries (BRENNER 2004a; SWYNGEDOUW 1997). In this context, the inherited nationally-focused framework of state spatiality which underpinned the 'Fordist' model of German capitalism has also been reconfigured. Following BRENNER (2000), during the 1980s these changes were grounded upon a mixture of neo-liberal, fiscally-conservative, technocratic and *etatist* elements of an economic and social policy oriented towards the promotion of endogenous growth potentials, interspatial competition and an increasingly self-reliant role for municipal institutions. In the post-unification period, spatial politics were integrated directly into the broader neo-liberal project of deregulation, institutional erosion and intensified interspatial competition often associated with the debate on '*Standort Deutschland*' (Germany as an investment location). The intra-national and uneven geographical development of distinctive regional and metropolitan urban economies was increasingly viewed as the geographical foundation for renewed economic growth and national and European competitiveness.

In contrast to the traditionally redistributive and compensatory agendas of national spatial planning (*Raumordnungspolitik*) in Germany, which aim at the 'equalization of living conditions' ('*Herstellung gleichwertiger Lebensbedingungen*') since the approval of the Spatial Planning Law (*Raumordnungsgesetz*) in 1965, and justified as a derivation from Article 72 of

the German Constitution, which requires 'uniformity of living conditions' (*Einheitlichkeit der Lebensverhältnisse*) throughout the national territory, recent decades have seen a gradual paradigm shift (BRENNER 1997b, 2000; BLOTEVOGEL 2006a) becoming visible in the field of national spatial planning (*Raumordnungspolitik*). This has been summarized by BRENNER (2000, p. 330) as follows: First, the new planning frameworks introduced during the 1990s have emphasized the regional scale rather than the national economy as the most crucial geographical target for spatial planning policies. Second, spatial planning has been redefined into an instrument of competitiveness policy rather than being seen as a mechanism for managing spatial disparities within the national territory. Finally, the issue of socio-territorial 'equalization' has been redefined such that it is now rendered consistent with the government's new priority of enhancing the productive forces of major urban regions. The balanced growth of national economic space is now viewed as a task involving the promotion of regionally specific development trajectories while the equalization of life conditions was now to be secured by creating the conditions for intensified regional specialization and territorial differentiation: The equivalence of living conditions should not be confused with their uniformity. Enough room for manoeuvre must be maintained to enable different trajectories as well as initiatives from below (*Eigeninitiativen*). The state cannot guarantee equalization in all areas, but can merely provide assistance for investments and initiatives which favour self-reliant regional development (DEUTSCHER BUNDESTAG 1994, p. 2).

Implantation in strategic spatial planning: the birth of the 'European Metropolitan regions' (EMRs) concept in Germany

The justifications for these policy adjustments were elaborated in two key policy documents by the Standing Conference of Federal and State Ministers Responsible for Spatial Planning

(*Ministerkonferenz für Raumordnung*, MKRO) in the 1990s. According to the Framework for Spatial Planning Policy Orientation (*Raumordnungspolitischer Orientierungsrahmen*, ORA) of 1992, the major urban regions are the regional growth engines for the spatial development of the national territory as a whole (BMBAU 1993: 6) and a strengthening of ‘endogenous regional capacities’ is thus viewed as the appropriate mean to enhance the competitiveness of ‘Germany and its regions as investment locations’ (BMBAU 1993: 13). Two years later the Framework for Spatial Planning Policy Implementation (*Raumordnungspolitischer Handlungsrahmen*, HARA) delineated six ‘European Metropolitan Regions’ (EMRs) – Berlin/Brandenburg, Hamburg, Munich, Rhine-Main, RhineRuhr and Stuttgart – as the ‘engines of societal, economic, social and cultural development’ (BMBAU 1995a, pp. 27-29). They are defined as spatial and high-performance locations whose outstanding functions transcend national boundaries and thus have impacts on the international scale. The urban agglomeration around Halle, Zwickau, Leipzig, Chemnitz and Dresden (the so-called Saxony Triangle) joined this new league of urban-regions in 1997. Finally, in 2005 another four – Rhine-Neckar (Mannheim, Ludwigshafen, and Heidelberg), Bremen/Oldenburg, Nuremberg and the city-triangle Hanover-Braunschweig-Göttingen also become members of this exclusive club (BMVBW 2005a).

Apparently, there is a greater need for pooling together spatially spread potentials, which becomes most obvious in those constructs like Hanover-Braunschweig-Göttingen in Lower-Saxony or the Saxony-Triangle with the perspective of incorporating further cities in Central Germany such as Jena or Erfurt (BMVBW 2005b). It is very striking that these strategic spatial constructs are to be used for a new, re-shaped wave of policies focused on rather unrealistic hopes for synergies resulting from complementarities and regional cooperation between spatially dispersed cities with weak functional connections. From an analytical point of view such

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strategic spatial articulations are not very convincing, as they contradict any current theoretical approach concerning ‘metropolitan regions’ and their respective functions as such. As such, they can instead be interpreted as embodying the hope to have set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy, claimed in particular by the former federal government Minister for Spatial Planning who was also in charge of the development programme for the former GDR (BMVBW 2005b). But, such a hope – in terms of pooling together spatially spread potentials where any functional synergy is hardly to be anticipated – failed for the most part in those strategic spatial planning concepts in the 1990s, which became popular under the label of ‘urban networks’.

Indeed these documents are rather strategic in nature as they are neither binding on any stakeholder nor are any financial investments coupled with them. Taking into account the advisory function of the MKRO, these documents were designed to help co-ordinate and guide sectoral policies at the national level. The Federal States (*Bundesländer*) were however invited to apply the recommendation of the MKRO in their specific incentives, programmes and plans. In other words, the messages contained in these documents can be regarded as basically representing an ‘argumentative framework’ for certain policies.

It should be also added here that the concepts and arguments used in the German discussion are almost congruent with those debated at the European level. Although the German proposal to integrate the EMR-concept in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) has not been converted literally (cf. BMBAU 1995b), its basic elements, namely that of ‘balanced competitiveness’ and ‘polycentric development’ (EUROPEAN COMMISSION 1999), can easily be interpreted by certain stakeholders as a guideline to specifically enhance the network of strong, competitive urban growth poles, i.e. those urban configurations that are, in principal,

identified as 'metropolitan regions'. The 'Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas', a lobby group constituted by key stakeholders from the member cities and regions, does indeed interpret these ESDP messages in this way (METREX 2004). They argue that metropolitan regions play a key role in achieving the targets of the Lisbon agenda, via which, by 2010, the EU's Council of Ministers hopes to have shaped the European Union into the most innovative and competitive powerhouse in the world. Not surprisingly, the German counterpart, the 'Network of German Metropolitan Regions' (2003), argues in the same direction and also calls for more political attention to be paid to their needs as growth engines for national as well as international spatial development (IKM 2003, 2005, 2006a).

To sum up, the concept of 'Growth and Innovation' (BMVBS 2006) sees spatial planning and development policy subordinate their traditional objectives and strategies to the national and European objective of promoting overall economic growth and competitiveness. The current round of state re-scaling in Germany suggests that in order to strengthen the overall national economy urban agglomerations in general and metropolitan regions in particular remain the focus to the detriment of certain other types of regions. There is an obvious, albeit gradual, shift occurring in the debate as those claims gain more attention namely that economic policies should concentrate more on picking winners – i.e. supporting growth cores for economic development to 'strengthen strengths' ('*Stärken stärken*') – than on helping losers, located particularly in the rural parts of eastern Germany. As such however there remains some dispute as to the standard at which the provision of spatial planning and policies should continue to focus with regard to services and social infrastructure (ARING 2005; FREY and ZIMMERMANN 2005; HAHNE 2005; HÜBLER 2005; ZIMMERMANN 2005).

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The current discursive strategy of reconciliation: potential winners are to be found everywhere

These neo-liberal regionalization strategies are however internally contradictory insofar as they intensify uneven development at the national scale and undermine socio-political cohesion. This has challenged various 'discursive strategies' to calm potential political conflict by suggesting strategies to help manage (at least rhetorically) the new uneven development. First, the concerted ambitions of a number of German conurbations – namely, Hanover-Braunschweig-Göttingen, Bremen/Oldenburg, Nuremberg and Rhine-Neckar – to be granted official admission by the MKRO to the club of the metropolitan regions (cf. exemplarily PRIEBES 2004; FROMMER and BOMBA 2004; SCHMITZ 2005) have been successful. Apparently the indisputably positive suggestive effect of this 'new elite' in the politically constructed German urban system is not the only strong argument for these efforts. Those stakeholders taking the initiatives in these conurbations assume, and even claim publicly (see above), that this enhancing discourse on metropolitan regions will not remain simply a matter of rhetoric, plans and concepts, but could in future also result in more direct incentives being provided by the EU for instance. Apparently they have already perceived that the EMR-concept offers an attractive discursive framework for political negotiations at the Federal and at the national as well as at the EU level in respect of 'their' specific interests to enhance the international competitiveness of 'their' metropolitan regions.

The 'implantation' of metropolitan regions across the country however somewhat mitigates the effect of the original 1995 concept. In its current state, such a fuzzy concept may be perfectly suited to political rhetoric and can be thus used as a 'discursive frame', but it offers no convincing framework for spatial planning and policies, as it merely supports the discourse that

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3 suggests that urban agglomerations should be strengthened because of their underlying growth
4 potentials. Moreover, such an erosion of the originally already somewhat vague concept can also
5 be seen as another consequence of the complexity of the German Federal System. As a matter of
6 course each Federal State (Land) claims at least one metropolitan region on its territory, so that
7 the State Minister's successful initiative for the official assimilation of the four new
8 metropolitan regions can also be seen as a consensus-building strategy to placate those
9 politicians that would like to have one – or even a second – in their Federal State. As a
10 consequence of this we see in the north-west (Hamburg, Bremen/Oldenburg and
11 Hanover/Braunschweig/Göttingen) as well as in the south-west (Rhine-Main, Rhine-Neckar and
12 Stuttgart) of Germany the overlapping of metropolitan regions.
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29 Secondly, in the current debate over the new spatial visions and strategies for action in relation
30 to German spatial development by the MKRO it is often emphasised that these metropolitan
31 regions do also comprise a larger rural or semi-urbanised hinterland, which should profit from
32 and complement the strategic role of the narrower metropolitan regions. The vision in respect of
33 these 'large area communities of shared responsibility' (*großräumige*
34 *Verantwortungsgemeinschaften*) (see BFAG et al. 2005; BMVBS 2006 and the discussion by
35 HAHNE and GLATTHAAR 2005 and BLOTEVOGEL 2006b) is to achieve a close level of
36 cooperation between centres, their surrounding areas and peripheral regions, that meets both the
37 equalization goal of spatial planning and the requirement of equivalency. Considering the large
38 spatial extension of these regions, the BMVBS however emphasizes that these large areas would
39 not replace the existing administrative structures of Federal States (*Bundesländer*) and regions.
40 The likelihood of regional cooperation and redistribution not only between centres and their
41 surrounding areas but also with peripheral regions far away from the narrow metropolitan
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regions is however rather unrealistic – if only for the lack of common interests and regional consciousness between the different actors. The idea of ‘large-area communities with shared responsibilities is, therefore in the end, simply an ideological, albeit useful, phrase designed to make the narrow metropolitan region responsible for the equalization goal of spatial planning and, at the same time, to continue the politics of regional differentiation and competition at the national scale. The ‘tension’ between the development of metropolitan regions and the objective of national territorial cohesion simply cannot however be solved discursively.

A third strategy of reconciliation is the construct termed ‘Regiopolis’, which has been introduced in the new spatial visions and strategies for action (BMVBS 2006). This is a new branding device for those municipalities which stand in the shadow of metropolitan regions. The impression emerges that this branding device has been invented to prevent these centres from acquiring any ambitions in respect of gaining official affiliation from the MKRO as metropolitan regions. Nevertheless, the political message is clear: Even mid-sized city-regions like Kassel, Munster or Magdeburg are not forgotten within this new spatial perspective for growth and innovation.

The original intention to strengthen those metropolitan regions, which do indeed host a set of metropolitan functions of superior importance, is however becoming increasingly blurred. Apparently by referring to the global competition as an indispensable inherited necessity, the call for the construction of, or support for, metropolitan regions as such is an indispensable political reflex in Germany the role of agglomerations in general are stressed. The distinct division of metropolitan functions that has developed among a handful of urban agglomerations such as Berlin, Hamburg, Rhine-Main, Munich or RhineRuhr is not however sustained.

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3 Additionally, in the existing strategic document a further differentiation has been ignored
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5 between those urban regions and their primary functions at the regional scale and those that are
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7 able to perform ‘metropolitan functions’ of national or even international scope. These latter
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9 aspects will be highlighted from an analytical point of view in the following section.
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12 13 14 15 **GERMANY’S POYCENTRIC METROPOLITAN SYSTEM**

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17 Traced back to its historic formation, the national urban system in Germany is characterized by a
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19 dense network of vibrant small and medium-sized cities along with a dozen larger ones with
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21 populations of more than half a million inhabitants. Looking at the actual geography of those
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23 metropolitan regions that constitute the new strategic political map of Germany, differences
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25 concerning their overall size (population, area) are striking (see table 1). It thus becomes obvious
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27 that RhineRuhr is in terms of population (and also by overall GDP or GVA respectively) by far
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29 the biggest metropolitan region. The table however also confirms another trend, one which could
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31 be termed the ‘bubble effect’, which has seen the sparsely populated hinterlands of metropolitan
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33 cores such as Hamburg or Nuremberg wanting to participate in the current boom of metropolitan
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35 region construction in Germany, something that can be retraced by studying population
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37 densities. In the case of Nuremberg, incorporation can also be explained by the need to gain a
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39 convincing critical mass in order to convince the MKRO to grant official affiliation status as a
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41 metropolitan region.
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50 51 **Insert here: Table 1**

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53 To gain a fuller picture of the differentiation across, and the labour division within, the German
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55 metropolitan system their provision of specific metropolitan functions has to be considered. The
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57 federal government’s Office for Building and Regional Planning (*Bundesamt für Bauwesen und*
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Raumordnung, BBR) has elaborated a set of indices for a total of three groups of metropolitan functions, based for the most part on the German scientific community's commonly agreed systematisation of BLOTEVOGEL (2005, 2006b). His work takes on board the academic discourse on world/global cities or metropolitan regions respectively and deals with the bundle of metropolitan functions which characterize metropolitan regions. A total of four functional groups were defined: Decision and control, innovation and competition as well as gateway and symbolic functions. These functions are not limited to metropolitan regions alone. However, when they are combined and concentrated in a certain way, they become typical and characteristic features of metropolitan regions (and their metropolitan cores). Metropolitan regions are concentrated centres of political and economic power: they control flows of finance, goods and information. Company headquarters, public and political decision-makers and associations, institutions such as banks, stock exchanges, insurance companies and services, such as law offices, advertising agencies, accountancy firms, business consultancies or rating agencies tend to concentrate here. Metropolitan regions are also competitive centres of innovation and growth and as such are characterized by a high density of scientific and research facilities, an above-average and wide range of cultural facilities, and the existence of a creative community. Being closely integrated with the international and intercontinental network of harbours, airports, high-speed railways, motorways, and telecommunication systems not only ensures the good accessibility of metropolitan regions, but also guarantees that knowledge, information and markets in such regions are highly accessible. Finally, the production of symbols and images is also important, because they express the international character of a metropolitan region.

Although not always very convincing, and restricted by the lack of meaningful comparable data, the BBR (2005, pp. 177-187) has measured those functions through 24 indicators at the national and 15 at the international scale. The chosen indicators are assigned to the three main areas of metropolitan functions. All indicators are z-standardized and connected in an additive way to indicators of the partial functions. The total value of metropolitan functions results from the additive connection of these partial indices. The results (see table 2) offer an initial picture of the performance of metropolitan functions in those regions. Moreover, we can see that, unlike Britain or France, no single dominant metropolitan region exists. Germany's polycentric regional structure results in high-level centres of international importance being distributed across the entire federal territory. Second, Rhine-Ruhr, Rhine-Main Munich and Berlin/Brandenburg form the top flight of the German metropolitan system. The highest concentration of metropolitan functions can be seen in these regions while the supply of metropolitan functions in Germany is based on the division of labour between these regions. Nevertheless, for clarification purposes the metropolitan functions of RhineRuhr are distributed between seven centres (Düsseldorf, Cologne, Bonn, Essen, Dortmund, and Bochum), while in Rhine-Main there are at least four main centres (Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, Mainz and Darmstadt), although Frankfurt is much more dominant than Düsseldorf in RhineRuhr (see below).

Insert here Table 2

Moreover, according to the rather tentative qualification (based on various available indicators similar to those used by the BBR (2005) and on a subjective point of view) of some selected place-specific critical assets in the largest German metropolitan regions (BLOTEVOGEL 2006b), it becomes obvious that all metropolitan regions are a long way from covering the

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whole spectrum of metropolitan functions at a relatively high level (see table 3). Even though national policies now aim at re-establishing the cultural and innovative functions of the old/new capital city Berlin, the relatively stable division of labour among the larger urban agglomerations and their contextualised development paths on the one hand and the decentralised federal system on the other makes any significant re-structuring of the hierarchy and the rather complementary structure of Germany’s polycentric metropolitan system unlikely.

Insert here Table 3

We can also draw some important conclusions from the comprehensive work of the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Study Group and Network at Loughborough University, led by Peter Taylor. Their interlocking network model of inter-city relations was devised to describe the way in which global/world cities are connected to one another in contemporary globalization (TAYLOR 2004). The Loughborough analysis does not attempt to measure relationships between cities directly, in terms of actual flows of information or various physical flows. Instead it uses a proxy: the internal structure of large advanced producer service firms. Conceptualising ‘global cities’ as centres for advanced producer services (SASSEN 1991); GaWC research has posited a process of world city network formation with global service firms as the key agents or network makers. 100 global service firms are modelled in the role of ‘inter-locking’ cities through their global office location practices. This model was then applied to 315 cities worldwide and a ‘world city network’ derived including measures of network connectivity between cities. All links of connectivity are presented as proportions of the highest city connectivity thus creating a scale from 1 (= London) to 0. Looking at the global connectivity of the primary centres of Germany’s metropolitan regions we can thus get a picture

in how far those places are interconnected into the global space (see table 4): Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich, Düsseldorf and Berlin achieve between 57 percent and 40 percent of London's value (= 100 percent). The core cities of the Metropolitan regions are however less well connected at the global scale. As such then, the relatively balanced polycentric structure of the German metropolitan system particularly in comparison to that of the UK (HOYLER and PAIN, 2002) can thus be confirmed once again, even though it should be noted that because of the specific indicator chosen here, the outstanding position of Frankfurt as the most globally connected market place in this respect becomes obvious. What is also striking is that we can distinguish a 'second group' of primary centres (namely Hamburg, Munich, Düsseldorf and Berlin) with almost the same values or ranks respectively and with a certain gap to the other primary centres.

Insert here Table 4

METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE: RESCALING WITHIN RHINERUHR?

As outlined in the preceding sections, urban locational policies are premised upon spatially polarizing institutional and regulatory initiatives. The polarization of national territorial development is seen as a necessary and manageable side-effect of such policies to maintain national or European growth and economic competitiveness. In practice, as numerous urban scholars have suggested a number of regulatory failures and crisis-tendencies have been generated through the mobilization of urban locational policies across the western European urban system in the last two decades (cf. BRENNER 2004a, pp. 263-267 and the cited references). New state rescaling such as metropolitan reform initiatives, inter-urban networking initiatives or neighbourhood – based anti-exclusion initiatives have thus come to operate as a

form of crisis management designed to manage the regulatory deficits and conflicts induced by earlier rounds of state spatial restructuring (cf. BRENNER 2003; BRENNER 2004a: 267-294). These forms of state rescaling have been oriented towards the place-specific political-economic conditions of urban regions and have also reintroduced a concern with territorial cohesion back into debates, which is now seen as a basic precondition for regional economic competitiveness. Intra-regional uneven development and excessive inter-locality competition within an urban region are thought to undermine the region's competitiveness at supra-regional scales. Region-wide forms of inter-organizational cooperation, coordination, planning and governance are thus promoted as key components of regional economic development strategies.

The challenge of intra-regional uneven development and diverse urban trajectories

RhineRuhr lacks a clear leading city and is marked instead by a polycentric agglomeration of numerous strong cities together with a greater number of smaller cities, which stretches along the Rhine from the city of Bonn in the south via Cologne, Düsseldorf and finally Mönchengladbach and Krefeld in the west and then eastwards along the basin of the Ruhr via Duisburg, Essen, and Bochum up to Dortmund in the northeast. Five of these cities count more than half a million inhabitants; among them Cologne is about to exceed one million. RhineRuhr covers 11,500 sq km and currently has about 11.7 million inhabitants (i.e. more than 60% of the population of North Rhine-Westphalia) and an employment total of 5.4 million (HALL and PAIN 2006, p. 21). From the point of view of the State government, the potential weight of a metropolitan region RhineRuhr in comparison with the rest of the state is therefore regarded as a threat. Following the current process of intra-regional integration, RhineRuhr can be divided into three large parts. About half of its area and population falls in the Ruhr area (5,200 sq km/5.8 million inhabitants), whereas the sub-regions Düsseldorf-Wuppertal-Mönchengladbach

and Cologne-Bonn with 3,000 sq km/3.2 million inhabitants and 3,700 sq km/2.8 million inhabitants respectively, are much smaller. Regarding employment, one can see a minor gradation as the amount of workplaces per inhabitants is relatively lower in the Ruhr area (BLOTEVOGEL 2006c, p. 29).

Although RhineRuhr still has a relatively strong industrial base in comparison to other metropolitan regions (cf. KRÄTKE 2004), de-industrialisation is taking place all across the region. In general terms it has not thus far been possible to offset jobs losses in the Ruhr's industrial sector with new jobs in the tertiary sector. Due to several agglomeration advantages, the cities of Bonn, Cologne and Düsseldorf have done much better than the Ruhr cities in this respect. In the second half of the twentieth century Düsseldorf profited enormously from the tertiary sector and offset the loss of its traditional manufacturing sector workforce. Today, it is one of the leading centres of the German advertising and fashion industry and has become the top telecommunications centre in Germany. Cologne's economy prospered from the steady growth in the number of media companies, in both the private and the public sectors, on the one hand and from being an insurance and automotive centre. In addition, the former (provisional) capital of the Federal Republic, the city of Bonn has been able to compensate for the loss of its political status and the important political institutions that went with it in the second half of the 1990s, thanks to € 1.4 billion in financial support to help re-structure its economic base. As one result, the cities of Bonn, Cologne and Düsseldorf, plus their urban rings, saw a slight increase in employment between 1980 and 2003. The strong economic cores Düsseldorf (+ 3.1%) and Cologne (+ 9.8%), however, did not develop as positively as Bonn (+ 21.3%). Along the Ruhr however a generally negative trend can be seen. Specific losers are, for instance the city of Duisburg, which lost 29.8 % of those employees contributing to the social insurance system

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during the period 1980 to 2003 while the city of Dortmund lost 13.6% in the same period (REGIONALAGENTUR NRW DER BUNDESANSTALT FÜR ARBEIT 2004).

In spite of its relatively strong high-tech industrial profile in different fields, today the secondary sector is more strongly represented outside RhineRuhr than within it, while the service sector in general, and advanced producer services (APS) in particular, have a higher share within the region than in the rest of North Rhine-Westphalia. The share of APS sectors together, in 2001, varies from 24.7 (Düsseldorf), 22.2 (Cologne), about 16.0 (Bonn, Essen, Dortmund) down to only 8.7% (Duisburg) (see table 5). Whereas Cologne is traditionally the main location for insurance, design and media services, Düsseldorf – followed by Cologne – constitutes the leading centre for advertising within RhineRuhr and together with Essen, the most important centre for management consulting, as well as law and accountancy. Logistics firms are well distributed across the region, namely in Cologne in the south as well as close to the eastern (Dortmund) and the western (Duisburg) entrance to RhineRuhr.

Insert here Table 5

This geography of APS-clusters indicates the existence of both polycentric sectoral specialization and a division of labour between the metropolitan cores of RhineRuhr which is also confirmed by the analysis of the office networks of APS-firms, performed within the context of the POLYNET project (KNAPP et. al. 2006a). In this project (cf. HALL and PAIN 2006) the scope of Peter Taylor’s abovementioned interlocking network model of inter-city relations has been extended to describe inter-city relations *within* Mega-City regions and beyond. The POLYNET project explored the notion that due to increasing integration in the

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3 APS economy, facilitated by developments in information and communications technology,
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5 city-regions in North West Europe are becoming functionally multi-nodal. The eight city-
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7 regions chosen for study are however diverse in their urban structures with some having a
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9 tradition of polycentricity (particularly RhineRuhr and Randstad) while others are historically
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11 rather monocentric in their urban pattern with one city dominating its hinterland in terms of its
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13 size and urban functions (for instance London, Paris or Dublin). The metropolitan cores of
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15 RhineRuhr have extremely high levels of connectivity (all over 0.77) at the regional scale (see
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17 Table 6). This means that these regional centres are almost interconnected to the same extent by
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19 those APS-firms.
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27 **Insert here Table 6**

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31 Beyond the regional scale, the analysis shows a less balanced pattern of connectivity. While at
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33 the regional and national levels the connectivity of Düsseldorf and Cologne is almost the same,
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35 the relative importance of the functional urban region of Düsseldorf within RhineRuhr increases
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37 with higher geographical scales. At the European/global level, Cologne achieves only 61/58%
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39 and Essen even only 42/39% of Düsseldorf's value (= 100%). While both Cologne and
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41 Düsseldorf are important national-scale APS centres, the latter is the main international gateway
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43 that connects the region to wider international flows (cf. KNAPP et al. 2006a, p. 157).
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45 According to TAYLOR's (2005) updated calculations in 2004, Düsseldorf's global connectivity
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47 and the gap to Cologne and to the other regional centres has increased in comparison with 2000
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49 (see table 7): This also corresponds to the results of the BBR (2005) regarding the distribution of
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51 metropolitan functions.
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Insert here Table 7

Bringing together the results of this section, one can see both uneven spatio-economic development within RhineRuhr, hindering the further development of a single metropolitan region, on the one hand, and an emerging functionally connected polycentric urban network with a certain functional hierarchy and sectoral specialization, providing a potential for increased regional competitive advantages through economies of scale and scope generated by the regional fabric, on the other. Although the relatively similar size of the larger cities masks hierarchy and specialization, the low degree of hierarchical relationships has shaped the image of the region in the minds of regional stakeholders thus contributing to the feeling of competition that exists particularly between cities. Almost all of the important cities in RhineRuhr are about to implement economic development strategies to strengthen their roles as independent growth poles and the strategic spatial concept of one metropolitan region RhineRuhr rarely provides a more complementary frame of reference for individual local politics. In addition, the more prosperous cities try to set themselves apart from those that are economically less successful. Cities outside the Ruhr area such as Cologne and Düsseldorf, but also cities within, such as Dortmund, are afraid of the relatively poor external image of the area. Nevertheless, in accordance with the increasing budgetary crisis experienced by the public sector at all scales more and more people are of the opinion that redistribution and subsidies in favour of the Ruhr area should be discontinued or at least cut. The proponents of local or sub-regional competition argue that the notion of territorial equalization and solidarity must be thoroughly redefined in terms of the notion of local or sub-regional self-reliance.

RhineRuhr's current level of international competitiveness is supported by access to the critical mass that is necessary for the provision of metropolitan functions, amenities and places and for the vast spectrum of opportunities and resources that are made available in the metropolitan mosaic. Cities like Cologne, Düsseldorf or Essen are globalizing but face growing problems in attracting attention as single players among the mass of competitors. Individual cities related to each other in a synergetic way could make the polycentric urban region RhineRuhr more than the sum of its parts. Synergy could be generated through striving for complementarities, i.e. a distinct differentiation in the economic profiles of cities or urban facilities and through regional co-operation. Complementarities seem evident in so far as the main cities in RhineRuhr have developed different economic profiles, leading to a considerable sectoral division of labour and functional specialization. Attempts to bring the metropolitan-regional action level to the fore are, however, confronted with serious obstacles and even outright resistance. Here one must first and foremost note that regional co-operation at the RhineRuhr level has never been debated in a comprehensive and thus strategic manner. No substantial regional discourse on the opportunities to pool together the region's competitive assets to profit from the latent functional complementarities has, as yet, occurred. However, the complex polycentric setting of RhineRuhr is not only traceable in respect of its multifaceted functional profile, but also because of the distinct historic trajectories of its sub-regions. Here we have to cope with a juxtaposition of specific administrative territories and their political competencies, cultural identities and, last but not least, uneven economic developments, each of which have thus far hampered the drive to foster greater cooperation at the RhineRuhr level – even if a growing *sub*-regional networking in the Ruhr area has undoubtedly emerged in the last decade (cf. KNAPP et al. 2004, pp. 337-342). This lack of cooperation is of course not unique to RhineRuhr and can be seen in relation to more or less all metropolitan regions in Germany and beyond. In this sense, RhineRuhr is a

representative case in respect of the difficulties faced in developing metropolitan governance. Even if all polycentric city-regions are socio-spatial conflict zones for the articulation of multiple interests, identities and cultural differences it seems, however, that, in the case of polycentric urban regions such as RhineRuhr, the development of a functional, cultural/regional and strategic identity is also a specific matter.

The emergence of a more synergetic and multi-scalar development strategy for the RhineRuhr

Metropolitan regions create large catchment areas that connect various places to highly differentiated polycentric configurations. Thus, they extend over many territorial, institutional or mental boundaries. Old boundaries continue to exist but become porous, fluid and dynamic, resulting in the vaguer demarcation of the whole region. The collision of very different people, activities and utilizations results in strong, dynamic differences within metropolitan regions which should be acknowledged and which need to interact with each other to be creative and fruitful.

The individual cities along the Rhine and Ruhr have to realize that they are not islands, but rather parts of a more or less integrated conurbation, and that the polycentric configuration offers strategic chances through the systematic further development of the division of labour of the whole system and concentration on the specific urban profiles. Considering the results of more than ten years of restrained discourse on the development of a RhineRuhr metropolitan region however, the sobering conclusion is that the process remains in its infancy (a detailed study has been carried out by SCHMITT 2007). To date, it remains unclear even how this potential metropolitan region could play the envisioned role as a regional engine of economic

development. Certainly, political and economic stakeholders increasingly recognize the necessity of a regional development policy, though opinions as to which cities should build the RhineRuhr region remain divided.

At present, at least three alternative strategic ‘regionalizations’ of RhineRuhr can be distinguished (see BLOTEVOGEL 2006c: 34 and also Figure 1). The first suggestion rejects the idea of a metropolitan RhineRuhr region as a contradiction in terms seeing only big cities like London or Paris as metropolises. A stand-alone strategy of the region’s big cities would fit in well with the widespread local egoism.

Insert here Figure 1

This idea seems to be advocated in particular by the City of Cologne, which would be profiled as a metropolitan location by a stand-alone strategy (or at least as the core of a Cologne/Bonn region). A second point of view argues against a region stretching from Dortmund to Bonn because such region is seen as being too large and heterogeneous to develop a regional identity or the structures capable of inducing action. Divergent interests are seen in particular between the Ruhr area and the cities along the Rhine, but also between the old rivals, Cologne and Düsseldorf. The suggestion is, therefore, to construct at least two regions. In this light, the Ruhr area wishes to develop itself as a ‘Ruhr Metropolis’. However, both the eastern and the western wing cities, Dortmund and Duisburg, also have considerable reservations against more regionalization in the institutional framework of the existing Regional Association Ruhr (*Regionalverband Ruhr*). Moreover, the implementation of a ‘Ruhr Metropolis’ would not only neglect the strong functional connections between Düsseldorf and the Ruhr area but would also

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3 hinder both Duisburg's sometime desired decoupling from the Ruhr area and reorientation to the
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5 other Rhine cities and Dortmund's hope to develop itself into the 'Metropolis of Westphalia'.
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7 The construction of a 'Rhine City' is also disputed. The city of Düsseldorf seems to favour the
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9 connection of the cities along the Rhine from Bonn/Cologne via Düsseldorf perhaps to
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11 Duisburg, but this option suffers from the rivalry with Cologne. Moreover, the position of
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13 Wuppertal, Mönchengladbach and Krefeld remains unclear. Today, political efforts are thus
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15 primarily focussed on merely upgrading a 'Ruhr Metropolis'. One alternative here is the
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17 development of an efficient 'Metropolitan RhineRuhr Region' capable of action, as has been
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19 included as an objective in the state's Spatial Development Plan since 1995. Such a
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21 construction, however, is not yet visible and could perhaps, in future, only be created when
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23 influential businessmen and economic associations show a stronger commitment to the idea. A
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25 further idea, mentioned in passing, is the suggestion to develop the whole state of North Rhine-
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27 Westphalia as a metropolitan region. The government of the federal state (*Land*) together with
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29 the big cities could function as politically legitimate actors able develop together with other
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31 relevant actors a 'Metropolitan Region North Rhine-Westphalia'. Moreover, such large
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33 metropolitan region would fit in well with the state's interest in not allowing a RhineRuhr region
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35 to become too strong in relation to the rest of the federal state (*Land*).
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46 The most important conclusion to be drawn from this cursory overview of possible development
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48 alternatives is that much more attention must be given to diversity and to functional urban
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50 specialization in RhineRuhr as positive assets rather than barriers to communication and co-
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52 operation or to regional economic success. The region's multiplicity, complementarities and
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54 synergies link economic competitiveness to its polycentric and emerging integrated urban
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56 structure. Even though various stakeholders at different scales display a distinct awareness of the
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different and specialized sectors of the regional economy, and its diversified profiles and areas of competence, they continue to demonstrate a rather disappointing understanding of the potentials of both the functional complementarities of the various urban centres and the strengthening of individual profiles in order to engage in productive competition on the one hand and the potential synergies through networked cities on different scales, on the other. RhineRuhr is neither perceived as one complex and differentiated city-region, nor as a complementary site of different locations. Although ‘polycentricity’ in the sense of a variety of options (based on different urban profiles, landscapes or the availability of space) is seen as an advantage, more often than not the multitude of different stakeholders and conflicting interests spread across the polycentric city-region are viewed in reality as an obstacle to cooperative action. Most critical in this respect is the fact that, thus far, the state government has failed to take the initiative in respect of framing a substantial policy discourse on the future of its largest urban agglomeration, thus leading to the emergence of a cohesive, polycentric vision and strategy for RhineRuhr.

Considering the ascribed role as a metropolitan driving force, the promoters of a competitive metropolitan region must in particular answer three questions: What should the role of RhineRuhr be in the polycentric landscape of German metropolitan regions? What are the options for each metropolitan core city – but also other urban nodes – in respect of their functional integration and nesting within the regional urban system and how could better use be made of the synergetic potentials within the region? How can the regional system of cities be developed and how can the region’s competitiveness be improved without undermining the ‘structured coherence’ (HARVEY 1985, p. 140) upon which sustainable capital accumulation depends? In the current geo-economic climate, the development of a future metropolitan policy

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is confronted with the rescaled landscape of short- term oriented and often economically one-sided neo-liberal regulation that has generated not only new forms of socio-spatial inequality but also political conflicts that significantly limit the choices available to progressive forces. The future of a more sustainable regional development policy and a more long- term oriented form of regional competitiveness that also takes up the demands of the majority of the region’s inhabitants in respect of their everyday environment can thus be decided only through the playing out of ongoing political struggles simultaneously at the local, regional, national , and supranational scales.

From our analysis of the fragmented institutional landscape, fuzzy strategies, concepts and uncoordinated policies (see KNAPP et al. 2006b), we believe that the way to make use of this specific polycentric configuration is to understand RhineRuhr’s potentials from a functional point of view. Therefore any further strategic considerations should first of all pay attention to the most promising functional network within this city-region (cf. KNAPP et al. 2006b, pp. 145-46). The State government should avoid any debate that starts with organizational matters of metropolitan governance and, instead, design and moderate debates as to the best model of regional development and regional division of labour where the focus is on how the region *as a whole* can be connected to trans-regional flows and networks of people, goods, capital, information, and knowledge. Thus, the key factor would be for the respective stakeholders to clarify the role of RhineRuhr in a national and international context. Whatever strategic option for each metropolitan core city or urban node regarding their interconnectedness and nesting within the regional urban system in RhineRuhr will be found, all options then include a pooling of resources to sharpen the region’s profile and it’s multifaceted, but spatially spread, competencies. Notwithstanding this however a stable environment for trans-local cooperation

and coordination remains indispensable. Here, in order to achieve mutual problem-solving, new trade-offs, and new areas of trans-local cooperation, it remains essential to establish communication and learning alliances that go beyond traditional structures grounded in local self-interest. Thus, all options must be rooted in an agreed strategic regional framework (beyond the current neo-liberal concept of European Metropolitan Regions) in which all 'parts' or stakeholders can benefit from the implementation of policies which enhance each city's specific sectoral and functional profile and excellence by taking into account its role within, and for, RhineRuhr.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In post-1980s Western Europe, the current round of global restructuring represents both the intensification and the reworking of inherited patterns of uneven spatial development. With the proliferation of urban locational policies in recent decades, state institutions at various spatial scales began to promote the most strategic city-regions within each national territory as privileged sites for national economic growth and international competitiveness. Intra-national uneven spatial development is no longer viewed as a problem to be alleviated through redistributive policies, but rather as the geographical basis on which place-and territory- specific strategies of economic development may be mobilized. Thus, the contemporary metropolitan institutional reforms in European city-regions can be interpreted as a key politico-institutional mechanism through which the broader transformation of state spatiality has unfolded. Concerted efforts to enhance intraregional territorial cohesion and region-wide forms of inter-organizational cooperation coordination, planning, and governance are now viewed as a basic precondition for city-regional and national economic competitiveness (BRENNER 2003; 2004a; SWYNGEDOUW 1992).

This paper has traced the various ways in which the nationally focused framework of state spatiality – that underpinned the ‘Fordist-Keynesian’ model of German capitalism after World War II – has been systematically reconfigured to establish a regime of metropolitan regions as sites for expanded capital accumulation. Spatial planning and development policy subordinates its objectives and strategies to the objective of promoting overall economic growth. Apart from the traditional balancing objective of promoting regions with development weaknesses in order to adjust the living conditions, which should not be abandoned, policy is designed to support specific strategies in the promotion of strong regions which are said to be ‘growth motors’ for overall economic development (SCOTT 1996). In so doing, such locations are not to be considered in an isolated fashion but rather the potentials of a region should to be bundled while growth regimes should also be created.

As noted previously, the underlying challenge here is to manage this new uneven development and to calm potential conflicts in spatial planning and development policies at the national scale or, Germany’s case, at the level of the Federal States while also finding a new balance between the issues of economic growth and territorial competitiveness on the one hand and that of socio-territorial equalization on the other. However, talking up growth, through discourses of regional competitiveness, and through the spatial and scalar reorganization of the state from one scale to another – in this case from the city to the cooperative metropolitan region and further to the ‘large area communities of shared responsibility’ (*‘großräumige Verantwortungsgemeinschaften’*) – merely distracts attention away from the state’s inability to manage the capitalist tendency for uneven development (SMITH 1984). Counting alone on the hope that within a larger regional environment the growth centres of a region will assume

responsibility for the weaker areas in the hinterland and in the periphery thus seems rather unrealistic. Moreover, that they will practice solidarity by involving such areas in economic success and by contributing to the stabilization of their decline is not necessarily to be expected. Such a policy approach also makes the narrow metropolitan region responsible for the (former national) equalization goal of spatial planning and allows it to continue, at the same time, practicing a politics of regional differentiation and competition at the national scale. Moreover, the new city-regional spaces have first to create some forms of metropolitan governance and organizational capacity as necessary preconditions to the enhancement of their locational advantages and productive capacities in respect of the territory concerned. In this respect, the difficulties faced by RhineRuhr stakeholders seem to be particular to that region, relating to uneven intra-regional spatio-economic conditions, while the related competitive behaviour of different stakeholders strongly influences the future development of this region as a polycentric, but also complementary urban configuration. Moreover, we think that the findings arising from this case study are also illustrative, because most European countries are confronted with tensions emerging from the further development of at least one world or global city or several metropolitan regions and the real or feared neglect of the rest of the national territory. On the other hand, large conurbations with a dominant core city that increasingly develop into polycentric Mega City-Regions are also confronted with similar challenges in the creation of metropolitan governance structures for strategic regional development.

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Table 1: Facts and Figures on Metropolitan Regions in Germany

	inhabitants in 2004 (in mill.)	area in km ²	population density in 2004	GVA in 2003 per employee
RhineRuhr	11,51	10.819	1 064	55.505
Berlin/Brandenburg	5,96	30.343	196	44.532
Frankfurt/Rhine-Main	5,29	13.375	396	60.797
Stuttgart	4,66	10.946	426	56.814
Hamburg	4,25	19.801	214	60.163
Hanover/Braunschweig/Göttingen	3,94	18.577	212	49.967
Saxony-Triangle	3,52	12.130	290	39.025
Munich	2,53	5.504	460	69.592
Nuremberg	2,50	13.100	191	53.915
Bremen-Oldenburg in the Northwest	2,37	11.623	204	50.029
Rhine-Neckar	2,36	5.637	419	56.657

Source: IKM (2006b, pp. 5-6.), amended

Table 2: Indices of Metropolitan Functions

	Decision, control and service function	Innovation and competitive function	Gateway function	Sum of Metropolitan functions
RhineRuhr	388,77	208,80	279,92	877,49
Rhine-Main	243,55	103,42	180,21	527,18
Munich	205,39	88,27	108,52	402,18
Berlin/Brandenburg	117,34	136,97	113,84	368,14
Hanover/Braunschweig/Göttingen	86,17	70,20	110,04	266,42
Hamburg	119,19	65,92	70,75	255,85
Stuttgart	111,94	70,07	54,51	236,52
Saxony-Triangle	61,03	88,57	64,47	214,07
Rhine-Neckar	39,91	41,12	30,67	111,70
Nuremberg	35,46	35,44	36,45	107,35
Bremen-Oldenburg in the Northwest	34,31	30,71	38,84	103,86

Source: IKM (2006b, p. 12), amended

Table 3: Complementary Functions among the Top Flight of Metropolitan Regions in **Germany**

	Berlin	Hamburg	Munich	Rhine- Main	Rhine- Ruhr
DECISION, CONTROL AND SERVICE FUNCTION					
- headquarter of ‘Global Player’	+	++	+++	++	+++
- financial services	+	+	++	+++	++
- insurances	0	++	+++	+	+++
- advanced producer services	++	++	++	++	+++
- government, public administration	+++	0	+	+	++
- embassies, consulates	+++	+	+	++	++
- NGOs, associations, lobby organisations	+++	+	+	+	+++
INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVE FUNCTION					
- public financed basic research	+++	+	+++	+	++
- universities	+++	+	+++	++	+++
- private research and development	+	+	+++	++	+++
- knowledge-intensive services	+	+	+++	++	++
- High-Tech industries	+	+	+++	+++	++
- density of innovations/applications for patents	+	+	+++	+++	+++
GATEWAY FUNCTION					
- air traffic	+	+	++	+++	+
- high-speed rail	++	++	++	+++	+++
- position in the motorway network	++	++	++	+++	+++
- cargo transport centre	+	+++	+	+++	+++
- commercial agencies	++	++	+	+++	++
- fairs and exhibitions	+	0	++	+++	+++
- congresses	+++	++	+++	++	+++
SYMBOLIC FUNCTION					
- media	+++	++	+++	++	+++
- publishing companies	+++	++	+++	+	++
- theatre, museums	+++	+	+++	++	++
- architectural icons, cultural heritages	++	++	++	++	+
- art and generation and distribution of signs, idols, fashions, interpretation offers	+++	+	+++	+	+

Source: *BLOTEVOGEL 2006b; amended*

Table 4: Global Connectivity of Germany's Primary Metropolitan Region Centres

first centre of metropolitan region	global connectivity 2000*		global connectivity 2004*		difference in relation to the average of the global urban systems
	value	rank	value	rank	
Frankfurt (Rhine-Main)	0.58	14	0.57	10	+8
Hamburg	0.40	48	0.40	42	+1
Munich	0.40	49	0.45	30	+35
Düsseldorf (RhineRuhr)	0.39	50	0.40	43	+15
Berlin (Berlin/Brandenburg)	0.37	51	0.40	45	+19
Stuttgart	0.27	74	0.27	76	+13
Dresden (Saxony-Triangle)	0.16	157	0.18	129	+7
Nuremberg	0.12	198	0.07	259	-35
Hanover (Hanover/Braunschweig/Göttingen)	0.11	212	0.13	182	+27
Mannheim (Rhine-Neckar)	0.05	274	0.09	238	+30

Source: TAYLOR 2005; amended

* reported as proportions of the highest score (London = 1)

Table 5: Share of Sectors in Terms of Employees (Contributing to the Social Insurance System)
in 2003

	Düsseldorf	Cologne	Bonn	Essen	Dortmund	Duisburg
primary sector	0.12%	0.10%	0.05%	0.15%	0.05%	0.09%
secondary sector	19.46%	20.70%	15.44%	24.18%	22.38%	35.67%
trade, hotel and restaurant industry	20.90%	20.45%	12.92%	17.81%	18.07%	16.27%
freight forwarding, transport, mail and courier services	6.91%	7.23%	5.42%	5.40%	7.27%	9.44%
other non-APS	27.86%	29.38%	49.19%	35.68%	36.13%	29.88%
banking and finance	5.52%	3.29%	3.80%	2.77%	2.83%	2.98%
Insurances	3.50%	6.15%	1.51%	0.92%	3.63%	0.37%
real estate and rent and lease services	2.43%	1.37%	1.28%	1.93%	1.23%	0.95%
management consulting, law and accountancy	9.23%	6.31%	8.29%	7.90%	5.74%	3.38%
design and media services	2.06%	4.16%	1.24%	2.63%	2.40%	0.76%
advertising	2.01%	0.88%	0.86%	0.61%	0.27%	0.20%
sum of APS	24.74%	22.15%	16.98%	16.78%	16.10%	8.65%
total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: REGIONALDIREKTION NRW DER BUNDESAGENTUR FÜR ARBEIT 2004

Table 6: Connectivity of Functional Urban-Regions within RhineRuhr*

	regional	national	European	global
Düsseldorf	1.00	0.97	1.00	1.00
Cologne	0.99	1.00	0.61	0.58
Dortmund	0.90	0.77	0.37	0.34
Essen	0.89	0.75	0.42	0.39
Bonn	0.79	0.65	0.29	0.26
Duisburg	0.77	0.60	0.24	0.22

Source: KNAPP et. al. (2006, p. 157)

* reported as proportions of the highest score (connectivity = 1)

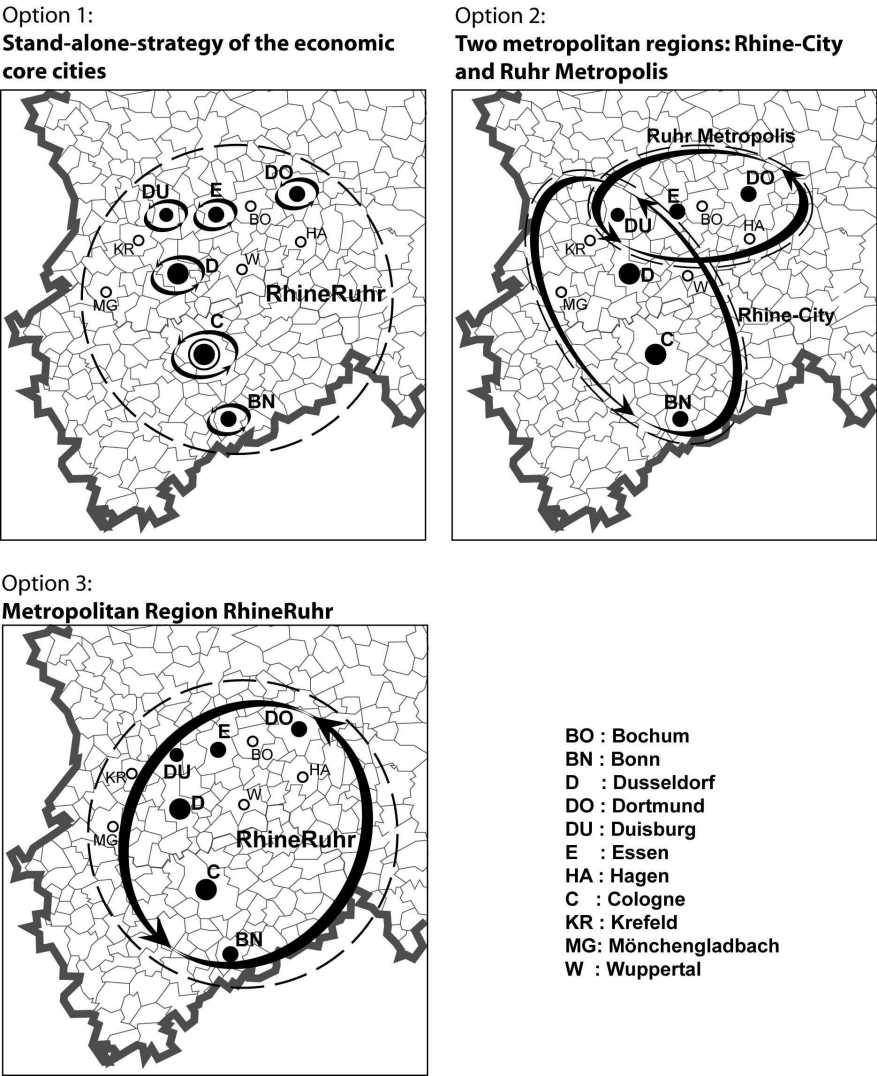
Table 7: Global Connectivity within RhineRuhr

centre in RhineRuhr	global connectivity 2000*		global connectivity 2004*		difference in relation to the average of the global urban systems
	value	Rank	value	rank	
Düsseldorf	0.39	50	0.40	43	+15
Köln	0.25	92	0.18	127	-35
Essen	0.10	232	0.08	250	-4
Bonn	0.08	246	0.06	266	-14
Dortmund	0.07	263	0.05	278	-9

Source: TAYLOR 2005; amended

* reported as proportions of the highest score (London = 1)

Figure 1: Alternative Strategic Regionalizations of RhineRuhr



Source; KNAPP and SCHMITT, following BLOTEVOGEL 2006c

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